

Mme Simcox Comments on The War's Influence upon Fashions

MME SIMCOX IS
AMERICA'S GREATEST DESIGNER
& CREATOR OF FASHION

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OW that the European struggle for supremacy is so tragically before us it is inevitable that it should show its influence in the workrooms of the couturiers. Indeed, the leaning toward the military is already strongly suggested in the lines and cut of the new tailored costumes, and the excessive use of braid on all street toilettes adds its quota toward emphasizing their martial character. Being a neutral nation, the same patriotic prohibition in adopting modifications of the warring countries' national costumes will not be present as it was in our conflict with Mexico, which came at the very moment when we were about to introduce into our garments the American interpretation of the charming Aztec camisa, or slip shirt, and the *rebozo* and *serape*, the square cornered shoulder drape and sash of the peon girl of Mexico.

At the present moment I am still inclined to favor the Russian Cossack styles with their severe little jackets and long, graceful flaring tunics for out of door wear, while some of the peasant costumes of Belgium as well as the more coquettish ones of Alsace and Lorraine are being charmingly translated into American house gowns in my workrooms. The dazzling silver and bright blue of the Austrian officer's uniform I shall soon requisition for

evening wraps of both the Balmacaan and Cavalier variety.

With Poiret gone to the front and many of the leading Paris dressmaking salons closed, not America only but Europe itself—at least that portion of it not engaged in active conflict—will look to this country for ideas as to what is the last word in matters sartorial, especially as the two other centers of fashion—London and Vienna—are also out of the running for dependable models, so now, more than ever, America has an opportunity to show that she is second to none in the creating and designing of modes and styles.

Before the crash came, however, I was able to personally select several models in the different Paris salons which indicate the trend of the most exclusive fashions for the fall. Dark colorings are decidedly in the lead for street wear, the smartest combination being of midnight blue, fine ribbed serge and black satin, which has wholly superseded the black taffetas so popular during the spring and summer. One chic "coat-dress" that I favor shows a combination of these two materials. The false jacket is hip length and jaunty, cut high under the arms and edged with soutache braid two inches wide. It is cut from the blue serge, while the waist, which extends from the under arm seams only, is of two bias strips of the black satin drawn tightly over the bust, one lapping the other at an oblique angle. A rolling collar finishes the neck and the plain coat sleeve is set in with conventional tailored effect. There is no girder or belt, as the turned in top of the skirt indicates the waist line. A novel touch to the long tunic, which drops to within four inches of the bottom of the skirt, is the "wall of Troy"



effect in which it is finished, headed by a banding of the soutache. The tunic is of blue serge, while the skirt foundation again shows the gleam of the black satin. With this somber frock a vivid velvet toque of the latest color called warrior yellow and running the gamut of the naturium shades from pale orange to Etruscan gold is most effective. The height of these new toques, by the way, is directly over the crown of the head and not toward the rear as formerly.

The pictured model Fig. 1, which illustrates the new guise of a Russian tunic, is made of black satin and net over a lace underskirt. The trimming round the edge of the tunic is a wide band of black ostrich feathers, handsome black silk cords finished with cords and motifs are draped about the hips. Incidentally, the craze for mounting white lace and even white taffeta tunics over black satin skirts is still extremely smart. I am designing some wonderful models on this order. When the lace tunics are ultra long the effect is somewhat that of a

lace petticoat. It goes without saying that basques figure prominently in these new frocks. It must be remembered that to wear the basque successfully it becomes a question of corsets. Do not make a mistake of wearing a basque with the corset of the low bust that has been worn for the past season or it will not give the result that the stylish woman is always so desirous of obtaining. The corset must be higher, but do not buy one of the high ones that was worn a few seasons back, for the result will not be satisfactory. The new corset gives a slight curve at either side of the front. In it the bust is raised at least two inches and there is an added fullness over the diaphragm which allows the bust ample room without restriction. This charming curve under the bust at the waist-line is the "ligne" of the coming season and will do more to hasten the departure of the slouch than anything else. So a word to the wearer of the basque should result in a new style of corset if she wishes to have the fashionable silhouette.

A basque costume of a simple but effective type is worn by Fig. 2. This charming casino gown was developed in two beautiful shades of green. The skirt flounced from waist to hem in a pale shade of green taffeta. The ruffles superimposed are caught up slightly on one side over a tight underskirt of the same silk. The charming bodice which fits plain over the shoulders and is slightly shirred under arms is in olive green velvet, the new green which has a glint of bronze in it. The sleeves are set in and are ruched down to the wrists and finished with an exceedingly smart little frill which forms a bow on the upper arm and is banded with a fold of taffeta. A smart color note is shown in the cluster of purple velvet flowers tucked in the waist.

One would have thought that the craze for floral decoration on gowns both for reception and evening wear had reached its height in midsummer, but the autumn shows an increase rather than a diminution in the demand for garlands and festoons of roses in particular, these being the sole ornamentation on the absolutely sleeveless bodices which are the mode of the moment, outlining as they do in a conventional wreath the extremely low décolletage of the tight plain bodice with its high under-arm piece and long pointed waist. These stiff little bodices and the much befrilled and be-ruffled skirts which as a natural sequence accompany them take one back sartorially to the days of the Commune in Paris and make us also visualize Becky Sharpe as she danced her way into rascally old Lord Steyne's heart at the famous ball on the eve of the battle of Waterloo. So the style is timely if nothing else. This reversion to the tight-fitting waists of the seventies will be rather difficult for some of us to compass after several seasons when the loose, baggy kimono styles, born of orientalism, accustomed us to ease and looseness in our garments. The high under-arm piece which now obtains is not only uncomfortable to the majority but most trying to all but an absolutely perfect figure, and, as I have previously mentioned, special corsets must be worn, and so in my models I do not as a general thing go to the extreme of this style, but rather adapt it to suit the personal exigencies of my customers. One may, indeed, indicate the trend of a new fashion without following it to its ultimate expression and thereby add to it an individuality not to be found when only the mechanical and not the imaginative part of the brain of the designer has been at work, for, after all, it is in the imagination and not in the skilled fingers that the creator's success lies.

To return to our flowers, even the street gowns continue to demand a flower placed at some chic and unexpected angle such as at the apex of the high Bernhardt ruche, where it nestles prettily against the hair in the nape of the neck. Again, a bud is seen nestling in the bow which fastens the belt confining the long Russian tunic in the back of the figure, and on one delightful costume a very flat full blown rose

was applied conventionally to each cuff of the extreme long sleeve which covered the hand to the first joint of the thumb. The Parisian fancy is to have a tiny bouquet of pansies, roses or other flowers placed high up on the corsage, almost under the ear. These little bunches, although artificial, look absolutely natural. A favorite combination is composed of sprays of jasmine and forgetmenots or a single spray of orange blossom surrounded by a few Parma violets, or again a spray of apple blossom mingled with maidenhair.

For those who admire an obviously

artificial effect there is a little corsage bouquet composed of orange blossoms and a single dark purple rosebud with one or two pieces of maidenhair.

Following the vogue for embroidered net comes the chic model, Fig. 3, which illustrates my article this week. This little model is an ideal frock for a hostess to wear at an "at home," and it would meet most satisfactorily the requirements of an informal dinner. The underskirt is of blue velvet, and the overskirt of blue and mauve embroidered net trimmed with pompons of silver cloth. The draped girde is in blue velvet finished with silver balls. The corsage is an artistic combination of mauve and blue embroidered net over pale mauve mousseline de soie. The last model depicted is made of the fashionable heavy poplin of which I am making many smart costumes of this fabric. I find that it can be manipulated more gracefully than most other materials. The costume shown in Fig. 4 is in Havana brown poplin over deep ecru lace. The long rajah tunic open in the front hangs in very full folds and is girdled about the hips with a ceinture of the same silk. The sleeveless waist is worn over a blouse of lace to match the underskirt.

Although I have said in a previous article that the ultra smart Parisian has discarded the cape for day wear, there is much to be said of the utility and grace of the long "costume capes," as they are called, to distinguish them from the ordinary cape, not an integral part of the costume. In America these are being worn and will be greatly worn during the coming season. Their variety is infinite and they are most distinct features of the autumn styles. As these long voluminous garments require many yards of material and as each one is designed to go with but a single costume, being usually of the same material as the foundation skirt, it is necessary to have a separate cape for each gown, an extravagant fancy which will be too costly to be followed by the hoi polloi and will therefore commend itself to the fastidious taste of Madame Modish. Some of these enveloping capes are laid in single box pleats; others are merely gathered. All, however, swing from the shoulders, military fashion, and are usually held in place by straps crossing over the breast and fastening at the waist line behind. In the newest models they are attached to a handsome "waistcoat" of cloth or velours de laine, which fastens down the front with a single row of buttons. These peleries give a decidedly smart air as they flutter in the fall wind. All are, at present finished at the neck by a ruffled or knife pleated ruche of tulle, soon, however, to be superseded by ostrich feathers arranged bon fashion, and later in the season by a narrow fur collar. The favorite among the fall furs will be the Australian opossum and the fur novelty of the times, the too long taboed monkey skin, the "pou de singe" which I mentioned in my article a few weeks ago. The long silky hairs of this fur are particularly glossy and beautiful, and it bids fair to play the stellar role in pelts for trimmings this winter—but more of furs anon.

Clara E. Simcox



As soon as one chronicles one mode another entirely different style appears on the horizon. Our silhouette is changing so rapidly that we can scarcely keep pace with it. Clara E. Simcox